

Pam -  
Misc.

1580

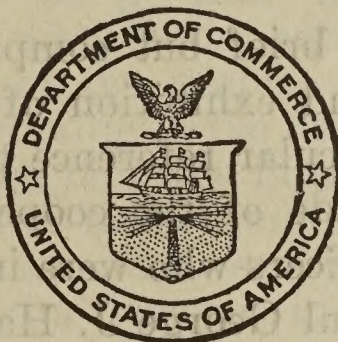
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

R. P. LAMONT, Secretary

**BUREAU OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC COMMERCE**

O. P. HOPKINS, Acting Director

**MOTION PICTURES IN JAPAN  
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, NETHERLAND EAST INDIES  
SIAM, BRITISH MALAYA, AND FRENCH  
INDO-CHINA**



Trade Information Bulletin No. 634

Price 10 Cents

**UNITED STATES  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE**

WASHINGTON : 1929



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
BUREAU OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC COMMERCE  
**FOREWORD**

Of the 54,335,000 linear feet of American motion-picture films exported to the Far East in 1928, the group of countries embraced in this bulletin received 31 per cent or more than 16,000,000 feet. These six countries represent a combined population of about 160,000,000, which are now being served by 1,720 motion-picture theaters, or one theater to each 93,000 persons. These figures are evidence that there is an important field for the exhibition of motion pictures in these countries. While American pictures are popular in this territory, foreign competition is keen; Japan's production of negatives (not positives), for instance, was 33 per cent greater in 1928 than that of the United States and actually double the production of all the rest of the world.

This bulletin presents a brief but comprehensive review of the production, distribution, and exhibition of motion pictures in the countries named, with particular reference to American films. Special acknowledgment is made of the cooperation of the following American foreign-service officers who were instrumental in obtaining the data herein: Vice Consul George J. Haering, Kobe, and Trade Commissioner Paul P. Steintorf, Tokyo, Japan; Trade Commissioner George C. Howard, Manila, P. I.; Trade Commissioner Don C. Bliss, Batavia, Java; Donald W. Smith, secretary to the trade commissioner, Singapore, Straits Settlements; and Consul Leland L. Smith, formerly at Saigon, French Indo-China.

Further information concerning the markets for motion pictures in the Far East may be found in the following recent publications of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce: Trade Information Bulletins No. 467, The Chinese Motion-Picture Market; No. 608, Motion Pictures in Australia and New Zealand; and No. 614, Motion Pictures in India. Another bulletin dealing with the market for American motion-picture equipment in the Far East, Near East, and Africa is now being prepared. Should American distributors desire additional data concerning any of these markets, the motion-picture division of the bureau will be glad to reply to specific inquiries and to supply whatever information it has available.

O. P. HOPKINS, *Acting Director,*  
*Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce.*

JULY, 1929.



# MOTION PICTURES IN JAPAN, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, NETHERLAND EAST INDIES, SIAM, BRITISH MALAYA, AND FRENCH INDO-CHINA

Based on Reports from Oversea Representatives of the Department of Commerce and the Department of State. Compiled by E. I. Way, Motion-Picture Division

## INTRODUCTION

The markets for motion pictures in Japan, the Philippine Islands, the Netherland East Indies, Siam, British Malaya, and French Indo-China are of peculiar interest and importance to American producers and distributors because the habits and customs and standards of living of the peoples in each of these territories differ vastly from those existing in the domestic and the other foreign markets well known to the industry in the United States.

American motion pictures face strong competition in the Far East, especially in these countries under review. Japan is the only one of these which has developed a domestic industry which comes near to meeting the requirements of its own territory. Yet in the other localities films of European and Chinese producers seem to be fulfilling the present undeveloped demands of the local exhibitors and are providing serious competition to the types and kinds of pictures that are being received from the United States.

Each country under review offers problems peculiar to its own, and each needs to be considered individually and studied thoroughly by the American exporter who desires to successfully market his films. Among the important factors to be considered in each of these far eastern territories are the censorship regulations and the lack of first-class equipment in practically all places where motion pictures are exhibited.

Imports of films from the United States have not shown a great increase in recent years, and the 1928 exports from this country did not reach the figure of 18,000,000 linear feet of film which were sent in the record year of 1927. Yet it is believed that these territories could, in due time, be developed by American motion-picture exporters to a point where each of these markets will be accepting a much larger quantity of film from the United States.

The following table shows the total amounts of film exported and the small fluctuations that have occurred in the quantities sent to these markets during the last seven years.



**EXPORTS OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE MOTION-PICTURE FILM FROM THE UNITED STATES TO FAR EASTERN COUNTRIES UNDER REVIEW,<sup>1</sup> 1922-1928**

[In thousands of linear feet]

| Country of destination  | 1922   | 1923   | 1924   | 1925             | 1926   | 1927             | 1928 <sup>2</sup> |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|--------|------------------|--------|------------------|-------------------|
| Japan:                  |        |        |        |                  |        |                  |                   |
| Positive.....           | 5,302  | 6,335  | 9,484  | 9,106            | 6,230  | 5,574            | 5,967             |
| Negative.....           | 205    | 62     | 336    | 17               | 96     | 1,529            | 260               |
| Total.....              | 5,508  | 6,398  | 9,821  | 9,124            | 6,327  | 7,103            | 6,227             |
| Philippine Islands:     |        |        |        |                  |        |                  |                   |
| Positive.....           | 2,179  | 2,235  | 2,108  | 3,050            | 2,571  | 3,885            | 3,100             |
| Negative.....           | 30     | 3      | 3      | 3                | 35     |                  | 17                |
| Total.....              | 2,210  | 2,238  | 2,111  | 3,053            | 2,606  | 3,885            | 3,117             |
| Siam:                   |        |        |        |                  |        |                  |                   |
| Positive.....           | 251    | 43     |        | ( <sup>3</sup> ) | 32     | ( <sup>4</sup> ) | 39                |
| Negative.....           |        | 1      |        | 10               | 40     |                  |                   |
| Total.....              | 251    | 44     |        | 10               | 72     | ( <sup>4</sup> ) | 39                |
| British Malaya:         |        |        |        |                  |        |                  |                   |
| Positive.....           | 2,788  | 1,995  | 2,329  | 1,710            | 2,673  | 3,820            | 4,034             |
| Negative.....           | 80     |        | 13     | 1                | 10     | 5                | 1                 |
| Total.....              | 2,869  | 1,995  | 2,343  | 1,711            | 2,684  | 3,825            | 4,035             |
| Netherland East Indies: |        |        |        |                  |        |                  |                   |
| Positive.....           | 2,014  | 1,531  | 1,988  | 3,044            | 3,061  | 3,447            | 3,392             |
| Negative.....           | 48     |        |        |                  |        | 8                | 5                 |
| Total.....              | 2,063  | 1,531  | 1,988  | 3,044            | 3,061  | 3,455            | 3,297             |
| Grand total.....        | 12,901 | 12,206 | 16,263 | 16,942           | 14,750 | 18,268           | 16,715            |

<sup>1</sup> Except French Indo-China, for which there are no recent statistics available.

<sup>2</sup> Preliminary figures, subject to revision.

<sup>3</sup> Exports were 775 linear feet.

<sup>4</sup> Exports were 998 linear feet.

## JAPAN

### DOMESTIC PRODUCTION

Motion pictures were introduced into Japan in 1896 by two Japanese, one of whom gave exhibitions in Tokyo with an Edison Vitascope; the other, a well-known Osaka importer, showed films through a Lumiere projector. Two years later the first Japanese film drama was produced, and in 1899 two leading stars of the Japanese legitimate stage were featured in a domestic screen production. The first Japanese news reel was taken on the occasion of a national wrestling tournament in Tokyo during the same year. Meanwhile French motion pictures were imported in growing numbers, and public interest in Tokyo had been aroused to a sufficient extent by 1902 to cause a promoter to convert a Tokyo theater into a motion-picture house.

By 1908 three Japanese companies had reached a stage of fairly regular production and the first three theaters were built, in Tokyo, Yokohama, and Kyoto, for the exclusive exhibition of motion pictures. The owners of the new theaters were also producers and distributors. The appearance in the field of a fourth producing exhibitor in 1909 led to keen competition, which resulted in the amalgamation of the four pioneer enterprises into the Nippon Katsudo Shashin Kabushiki Kaisha, a corporation established in 1912 with



an authorized capital of 10,000,000 yen (\$4,700,000). This company, commonly known as "Nikkatsu," was well organized on a sufficiently substantial basis to survive to the present day, and it is now considered to be one of the most progressive concerns in the industry. It adopted the policy of its predecessors in combining the functions of producing, distributing, and exhibiting, and at the same time importing foreign productions.

American motion pictures assumed first place in the Japanese import lists in 1916, a position which they have held by a large margin since that date. Distribution continued in the hands of Japanese firms, however, until the first branch of an American producer was opened in Tokyo in 1917, followed from 1922 to 1928 by the establishment of Japanese branches by six other American companies.

From 1918 to 1923 four new Japanese companies were organized on a firm basis, and with resources necessary to conduct their business of producing, distributing, and exhibiting. Acting on the same policy as "Nikkatsu," they obtained control of theaters and soon assumed strong positions in the trade.

The predominatingly domestic status of the Japanese industry was not threatened until 1926, when an American producing concern formed an alliance with a Japanese promoter for the production and exhibition of motion pictures in Japan and their exportation abroad. Technical experts and modern studio equipment were sent to Japan and operations were commenced. Internal difficulties led to a disruption of the combination within a year, however, and no further ventures of this nature have been undertaken.

In Japan a monopoly in any trade is usually prevented by the wide range in the requirements of various classes of consumers. Advanced Japanese and resident foreigners demand modern products of quality, regardless of cost; the middle-class users desire a fair quality at a moderate price; and the poorer consumers, whose tastes are less developed, require simple products at the lowest possible charge. This cheapness can be obtained through household production in which the cost of materials is the deciding factor, because an oversupply of labor in many Japanese homes results in piecework at any rate of pay which will assist the family budget. In the motion-picture field the equivalent of the household industry is found in the form of small producers using rented barnlike structures as studios and employing performers whose wages are paid when their productions are sold. This condition has enabled independent producers and distributors to compete in a small way with the powerful large companies, while the demand of the upper-class patrons in Japanese cities has maintained a market for imported motion pictures.

#### PRESENT STATUS OF PRODUCTION

Of the 16 producers who are now actively engaged in domestic production, 6 are distributors and exhibitors. This group owns 12 studios, 5 of which are located in Kyoto and 4 in Tokyo, and is responsible for about three-fourths of the total Japanese production of motion pictures. Four other companies are producers only, each having its own studio, and six concerns produce with the aid of rented structures converted temporarily into studios. This latter class is



made up of actors and directors formerly connected with the leading companies, and perhaps it can not be considered to be of a permanent nature.

One of the larger producing organizations has about 182 releases on its annual schedule. Of these, 156 are regular features issued at the rate of three a week, each costing from 8,000 to 10,000 yen to produce. (Par value of the yen is \$0.4985.) In addition, there are special features issued twice a month, each costing from 25,000 to 30,000 yen. The company also issues two extra special features a year, each costing from 80,000 to 100,000 yen. The total cost of production per year for this company can therefore be computed to be from 1,960,000 to 2,420,000 yen, which represents the total expenses of the company, including actors' salaries, office salaries, and all other normal expenses except the construction of new studios and office buildings.

The great number of releases is caused by the Japanese system of distribution, since the producer contracts to supply the theater with a program of three features a week and is forced to issue as many as he does, even though many of them are admitted to be of poor quality. Approximately 60 per cent of the features produced during 1927 were based upon classical Japanese dramas, the remainder consisting chiefly of tragedies of modern Japanese life and of episodes in recent Japanese history. There is a noticeable dearth of comedies.

According to an authoritative Japanese annual publication, the total number of domestic motion pictures produced during 1928 was 798, an increase of 150 over 1927. Of these, 479 were made by recognized companies and the remainder came from minor producers. These figures are on feature-length films averaging about six reels.

#### TYPES OF PICTURES PRODUCED

"Kabuki," the classical Japanese type of play, involves formal acting of a stilted nature in accordance with the rules of the Japanese legitimate stage from which such plays are adapted. Fixed gestures with set meanings and extensive posing are used to register emotions, so that the resultant production gives the impression of artificiality to spectators not versed in Japanese traditions. The plots deal with legends or romantic incidents in medieval Japanese history. Despite the lack of action and reality of these screen dramas, they appeal to the majority of Japanese, especially the very young and the conservative older people. Foreigners find them devoid of interest.

The influence of this formal style of acting adversely affects the performance of Japanese actors in pictures dealing with modern life. Despite continued improvements, which will no doubt eventually separate these schools of acting from each other, the action in film plays of modern life is still slow; there are numerous close-ups and excessive posing.

It is in outdoor photography that Japanese motion pictures excel, and the technical quality of interior scenes would also be of a high order if the studios were provided with adequate equipment and lighting facilities. The average Japanese has a naturally trained eye for artistic effect which is not missing in the cameramen of the nation. Climatic and natural lighting conditions are also favorable to production.



### COST OF PRODUCTION

Japanese features are produced in two to three weeks at an average cost of approximately 6,000 yen (\$2,820). Occasionally a special feature with leading actors from the legitimate stage is produced on a better scale. The record in this respect is a screen drama produced several years ago by Nikkatsu at a reported cost 150,000 yen (\$75,000). The returns from this feature are said to have been approximately 500,000 yen.

These results are possible because "Kabuki" plays do not require elaborate sets and because of the low scale of salaries paid to all persons engaged in production from directors and star actors down to coolies. Reports received from reliable trade sources indicate that the monthly salary of leading actors averages about 500 yen (\$250) and that a few stars are paid as high as 1,000 yen (\$500) per month. A few of the best-known actors are shareholders in the companies for which they perform. The average monthly salary of leading actresses is about 400 yen (\$200). It is customary for large producers to bear the living expenses of stars during their engagement, but this item probably does not amount to the equivalent of \$100 monthly. Supers and players in small companies have been known to perform without pay, compensation being dependent upon the rental or sales price received from distributors and exhibitors after a production has been completed. This low level of salaries can be maintained despite frequent efforts of competing companies to lure stars from their rivals.

Directors with the leading producers are considered well paid on a monthly salary of 800 yen (\$400), in addition to which some of them receive a bonus of 300 yen (\$150) upon completion of a major feature, and a bonus of equal amount if a production proves successful in its first run. Chief cameramen receive 400 yen per month and bonuses equal to those of directors. Assistant cameramen and assistant directors receive less than one-half the amount of the salaries of their superiors and are not entitled to bonuses.

### DISTRIBUTION

Distribution of motion pictures in Japan is practically controlled by five leading companies, but their dominance is not as great as in production and exhibition, since they are met with the competition of the Japanese branches of seven American producers and other foreign distributors. The total number of distributors in Japan during 1928 was 51; only 18 domestic concerns are of significance. Each of the five large producers has from 20 to 25 theaters of its own under its direct management. A full program of attractions, usually consisting of about 20 reels, is furnished weekly to these houses. In addition, the distributors rent their film to regular theater owners. It is common to make a yearly contract for a full program each week. The independent theater with respect to volume of production is thus treated in the same manner as a direct-management theater. The contract is either for a certain percentage of the gross receipts or for a flat rate per program.

Foreign feature-length films imported into Japan during 1928 numbered 410, according to a compilation made by the Japan Advertiser. These averaged about seven reels or 6,500 feet. Of these features, 290 were American productions and 120 represented all other countries. Thus, 70.7 per cent of all films imported were of American origin.



The policy of the leading Japanese distributors, based upon their control of exhibition outlets, has been followed by one American company by obtaining control of the leases and special exhibiting agreements of 11 theaters.

Imported feature films are often rented on a percentage basis (said to be approximately 30 per cent), but the practice of furnishing programs at a flat daily charge is most prevalent. The average charge for a program consisting of 15,000 to 20,000 feet of film is 175 yen (\$87) a day. Prices are subject to bargaining, and refunds are sometimes made when programs prove excessively unpopular. Conditions in the trade are highly competitive, but exhibitors are rarely allowed credit. The highest amount ever paid on this basis in Japan is said to be 250,000 yen, which was paid in percentage rentals for a well-known American feature. Other prominent American screen dramas have drawn approximately 150,000 yen.

From 1 to 6, and occasionally 10, copies of each production are distributed to meet the wear and tear on films shown in country theaters, whose projecting equipment and operators are usually not the best. Imported motion pictures have a life approximately equal to that prevailing in the United States, since they are first shown in the better houses which are fitted with modern equipment operated by experienced men.

#### EXHIBITION

There are approximately 1,120 motion-picture theaters in the Japanese Empire with an average seating capacity of 500 persons. This seating capacity is not a true indication of the size of Japanese theaters, however, because exhibitors limit the number of seats and provide extensive standing room in order to reduce taxation, which is based upon admission prices for seats. It is probable that the actual average audience capacity of motion-picture theaters in Japan is about 40 per cent greater than the seating capacity. Motion pictures are also shown at irregular intervals in other buildings, such as Y. M. C. A.'s and public halls. The number of houses of this type is unknown, but estimates appearing in Japanese newspapers indicate their number to be very large.

#### ATTENDANCE AND ADMISSION PRICES

Some idea of the attendance at theaters and the average admission prices can be gained from the following 1927 figures published by the Japanese Year Book. It is thought that the 1928 total attendance figures exceeded those of 1927.

MOTION-PICTURE THEATER ATTENDANCE IN JAPAN IN 1927

| Type of theater  | Attendance    | Average admission charge, in yen |
|--|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Houses devoted exclusively to motion pictures.....                       | 127, 184, 332 | 0.34                             |
| Houses showing mixed programs, including motion pictures.....            | 23, 313, 671  | .272                             |
| Public halls and other houses not regularly showing motion pictures..... | 13, 906, 714  | .227                             |
| Total attendance.....  | 164, 404, 717 | <sup>1</sup> .321                |

<sup>1</sup> Average charge, about 15 cents in United States currency.



The total admission charges for the year 1927 amounted to 52,740,-816 yen. These returns are considered subnormal as a result of poor attendance owing to the financial and economic depression of that year. The average price of admission quoted is confirmed by the calculations of a foreign distributor, who, after investigation, estimated the average charge at 32 sen (15 cents) per person. (One hundred sen equal 1 yen, about 50 cents in United States currency.) Standing room in rural houses can be obtained for as little as 10 and 15 sen, while in the best city theaters the scale runs from 30 sen to 1.50 yen, with occasional maximum charges of 2 yen and 2.50 yen for unusual feature programs.

Only 25 of the 1,120 regular Japanese motion-picture houses were not controlled by or under special agreements with Japanese producers or distributors. Their numbers, according to the programs shown were as follows:

|  | Theaters |
|--|----------|
| Japanese productions exclusively-----                | 930      |
| Mixed programs of Japanese and foreign features----- | 159      |
| Foreign productions only-----                        | 31       |
| Total-----   | 1,120    |

#### PREFERENCE FOR JAPANESE FILMS

There is no organized campaign against foreign motion pictures, but outside of the large cities, which are subject to constant and close foreign influence, there is such a marked demand for Japanese productions that programs consisting wholly of imported features can not be shown profitably. Producers and exhibitors are adequately protected by copyright regulations.

#### LENGTH OF PERFORMANCES

The maximum length and duration of programs is fixed by prefectural regulations, which vary in different sections of the country. The time allowed for one complete program is 4 to 4½ hours in most prefectures, with a maximum of 12 hours in some; the length of film that may be shown is limited from 20 reels in Tokyo to 4,600 meters in other districts. A combined restriction of 18 reels, with a length of 4,500 meters, prevails in Fukui Prefecture. The general allowance in the majority of prefectures is equivalent to 15,000 feet of film. Estimates show that programs are changed once weekly in 1,086 theaters and twice weekly or more often in 34 theaters. Runs of more than one week are rare and are confined to a few of the best Japanese and foreign productions. Several American features have had record runs of two to three weeks in a "first-run" theater.

Japanese motion-picture theaters may be classified according to the number of daily performances as follows: Once daily in 620 theaters, twice daily in 457 theaters, and three or more times a day in 43 theaters.

Only about 25 motion-picture theaters in Japan compare with the average modern American theater in a community having a population of 25,000 or more, but several new theaters, particularly in Tokyo, are now being constructed.



## TAXATION ON MOTION PICTURES

Taxation on motion-picture performances is assessed by prefectural and local authorities at varying rates in the different parts of the Empire. In Kobe, in Hyogo Prefecture, the present prefectural tax is 2 per cent of the full admission price of a theater's seating capacity. This percentage basis of taxation prevails in most prefectures and has caused theater owners to construct houses which have large standing-room spaces, thereby reducing the amount of their taxes. Municipal taxes or those assessed by local government bodies are not uniform. In some cities 20 or 25 per cent surtax is charged on the basis of the prefectural tax; in others, such as Kobe, there is a sliding scale based on the price of the tickets sold, ranging from 3 sen on 50 to 70 sen admission tickets to 30 sen on tickets costing from 2.50 yen to 5 yen. Some communities have a flat daily taxation charge.

The total taxes paid by exhibitors during 1926 amounted to 1,534,979 yen.

## INTERPRETERS

A most interesting and important feature in the exhibition of motion pictures in Japan is the interpreter or interlocutor who explains the action and meaning of a production to the audience. This unique profession was created when motion pictures were first introduced into Japan, since all the early films were foreign productions and the gestures, actions, and properties shown were unintelligible to most of the spectators. Consequently, it was necessary to employ interpreters to read titles and to explain the subject matter of the films. Nor was the necessity for interpreters done away with when Japanese photoplays entered the field, for the complicated system of Japanese and Chinese characters makes it almost impossible to flash brief titles and subtitles with sufficient meaning upon the screen. The slow action and formal gestures of classical Japanese dramas made Japanese pictures almost as difficult to understand as those produced abroad, and several interpreters frequently appeared alongside a screen at the same time, each reciting the part of an individual actor appearing in the motion picture.

Improvement in the quality of Japanese features permitted a reduction in the number of interpreters to one clever person who could mimic several characters. This system is now being employed, and each Japanese motion-picture house of significance has a staff of from four to seven interpreters who relieve each other during the course of a performance. Rural theaters giving only one daily showing usually have at least two readers.

These interpreters are the local dispensers of the latest witticisms, and the best of them have followings which patronize the theaters in which they appear regardless of the program offered. They are said to be able to augment their salaries considerably with voluntary contributions from admirers and by conducting schools for training their apprentices. The latter go to rural houses for experience and then gradually work their way up to positions on the staffs of theaters in the leading cities. The profession has about 7,000 masters and apprentices, most of whom are members of a guild. Police licenses are



required of all interpreters, and the demand for their services is so fixed that it will be difficult to displace them even with the advent of talking pictures. Their salaries range from 80 to 300 yen a month; apprentices are paid 15 to 30 yen monthly.

#### CENSORSHIP

On July 1, 1925, an official censorship bureau was established, and every copy of every film must now be censored at the central censor bureau in Tokyo, which operates under the Department of Home Affairs of the Imperial Japanese Government. Without a censorship certificate a motion-picture film can not be put on the screen in Japan; every week's exhibition in every theater in Japan must be approved by the local police station in the district in which the theater is located. Each police station has an up-to-date list of the films passed by the central bureau and each list contains the names of the authorized distributors of every picture. Each distributor keeps an employee at the censorship bureau to watch the films being censored, and this representative can prevent the issuance of certificates to unauthorized parties. It is practically impossible, however, to stop the exhibition of illegal copies once they are passed. The censorship fee is 5 sen (2½ cents) per 3 meters for first copies and 2 cen per 3 meters for additional copies.

Film censored by the Japanese central censorship board during the calendar year 1928 consisted of the following:

| Kind               | Length of censored films, in meters | Cuts, in meters | Censorship tax, in yen |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Japanese film..... | 947, 070                            | 517             | 7, 224                 |
| American film..... | 74, 870                             | 407             | 802                    |
| European film..... | 20, 380                             | 22              | 181                    |
| Total.....         | 1, 042, 320                         | 946             | 8, 209                 |

#### REGULATIONS OF MOTION-PICTURE FILM CENSORS

**ARTICLE I.** No motion-picture film is permitted to be exhibited to the public unless it has passed the censor.

**ART. II.** To have a film censored the applicant must supply to the Minister of the Department of Home Affairs the following information and two synopses of the film (in book form):

1. The name and address of the applicant (in case of a corporation) the name of the corporation and address of its principal office and name and address of its representative.

2. The title of the film, the name of producer, reelage, and length in meters (in case of a foreign film both original and translated titles are requested).

3. Any films of current events such as ceremonies, athletic games, etc., where the applicant has no time to apply to the Department of Home Affairs, application can be made to the prefectural censor, in whose territory the film is to be exhibited. (For prefectural censor in Tokyo apply to the superintendent general of police, giving the full particulars as described in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this article.)

4. The prefectural governor may authorize the chief of police or chief of a subpolice station to censor the film.

5. Should the board of censors deem it necessary the board may order the applicant to present the documents for the applicants exhibition rights to be certified to.



ART. III. Should the board of censors consider the film applied to be censored in compliance with the preceding regulations free from impediments to the maintenance of public peace, custom, or hygiene, the board will stamp the film with the official "Passed the censor" and will also enter on the synopsis book an official note accordingly.

The board of censors may stamp "Passed the censor" on the synopsis book and eliminate the stamping on the film.

ART. IV. The term validity of the minister's censor is three years. The term validity of the board of censors specified in Article II, clauses 2 and 3, is three months and void in other prefectural territories.

ART. V. The board of censors may, if the board deems it necessary, restrict the term of validity or the territory of exhibition regardless of the preceding regulations.

ART. VI. Should the board of censors consider the film previously censored as having become an impediment as specified in Article III, the board may prohibit or restrict the exhibition of such a film.

When the board of censors prohibits the exhibition of such a film according to the preceding clause, the board may order the possessor of the film to surrender it to have the official stamp effaced, and in case of restriction it may order the synopsis book presented for the alteration of the official note previously made on it according to the regulation specified in Article III.

ART. VII. To alter the title of a film which has been passed by the censors, it requires the permission of the board of censors by which the film was originally passed.

ART. VIII. The board of censors will collect the following fees for censoring films:

1. For the film which is to be censored by the Minister of the Department of Home Affairs, 5 sen per 3 meters or the fraction thereof.

For a duplicate of the film that has been passed by the censors, providing the application is made by the same applicant within three months after the date on which the first print of the film was censored; and a film recensored within six months after the expiration of the term of validity, 2 sen per 3 meters or its fraction thereof.

2. The censoring fee of the prefectural governor chief of police or the chief of a subpolice station 1 sen per 3 meters or its fraction thereof.

Should the board of censors consider a film essential for the public good, the board may exempt the censoring fee.

The fee must be paid in the form of revenue stamps and same should be pasted on the application. No fee will be refunded.

ART. IX. The censoring officers or police officers may enter for inspection the place wherein a film is being exhibited to the public. In this case the censoring officer will carry an official identification card. The censoring officer or police officer may demand to have the synopsis book presented for inspection.

ART. X. Should the official seal stamped on the film be damaged, the film should be presented to the board of censors for the restamping, and in case of loss, wear, or damage of the official seal stamped on the synopsis book, a new copy of the book must be presented to the board of censors for the official note to be made on it or to have the official seal stamped on under Article III.

ART. XI. Any of the following acts will be given the penalty of 100 yen or less or detention or a fine:

1. Persons who violate Article I.

2. Persons whose statements in certifying documents specified in Article II, clause 5, or in application specified in Article X, are found to be false.

3. Persons who have exhibited a film disobeying the restriction order specified in Article V or in Article VI, clause 1.

ART. XII. Any of the following sets will be penalized with a fine:

1. Persons who disregard Article VI, clause 2.

2. Persons who disregard Article VII.

3. Persons who refuse official inspection under Article IX, clause 1.

4. Persons who do not comply with the official demand under Article IX, clause 3.

ART. XIII. Should a minor or incompetent person violate any of the regulations herein specified, the penal code applicable for such an act will be applied to the legal representative of the offender with the exception of a minor whose business ability is equal to that of the average adults.



ART. XIV. Persons who exhibit films to the public can not escape the punishment applicable to the offense committed by his agent, head of the family, members of the family, persons who are living with the family, or employees because the offense has been committed without his knowledge.

ART. XV. Should a representative of a firm or its employees violate the regulations herein specified in the pursuance of the firm's business, the punishment will be applied to the representative.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY REGULATIONS

This regulation will be enforced on and from July 1, 1925.

The films that have already passed the censors before this regulation has become effective and enforced may have the film censored under the prefectural regulations for the period of one year and six months after this regulation has become effective.

The films that have already passed the censors before this regulation is enforced, or the films that have been censored under the preceding clause, shall be governed by the prefectural regulations for the period of one year and six months after this regulation has become effective, with exception of the films that have been censored under this regulation.

In censoring the films that have been censored under the prefectural regulations before this regulation became effective, the board of censors may, should the board consider there is no harm done in eliminating a part of the regular censoring procedure, eliminate part of the ministers' censoring procedure for the period of one year and six months after this regulation is enforced and stamp the official seal on the film and enter the official note on the synopsis book; in this case the fee shall be 1 sen per 3 meters or its fraction thereof.

#### PROTECTION OF FILMS BY LAW

Although there is no law of copyright in Japan, there is a law of author's right applicable to photographs and photoplays, under which the right of the author can not be infringed upon without exposing the infringer to criminal penalties as well as to a claim for damages in a civil action. American citizens are placed on the same basis as Japanese subjects in respect to these rights, by virtue of the copyright convention concluded between Japan and the United States on November 10, 1905.

In order to obtain prompt action in a Japanese court against anyone guilty of pirating films, the author of an American copyrighted film, or his assignee, but not the lessee, should grant a power of attorney, acknowledged before a Japanese diplomatic or consular officer in the United States, to a member of the Japanese bar authorizing such attorney to take legal action in his name. Japanese courts recognize only direct powers of attorney, and one granted by a distributor in Japan to a lawyer would probably not be recognized.

Article XXXVI of the law of author's right provides that when action has been brought thereunder, the court may, upon the application of the plaintiff, grant a temporary injunction against the exhibition of films suspected of infringing such rights.

One of the chief difficulties encountered in securing adequate redress against pirating is the impracticability of proving the extent of damages claimed, upon which, it is understood, the courts insist. Moreover, there is no provision for the recovery of the costs of the action, which renders it questionable whether the redress afforded will suffice to pay the cost of prosecution.

In view of the practical difficulties involved in obtaining redress against pirating through the courts under the law of author's right, a method of procedure has been worked out in Japan by certain dis-



tributors of American films and the Department of Home Affairs. This procedure virtually obviates the possibility of films being exhibited with impunity by unauthorized persons.

The regulations regarding the inspection of motion-picture films, which went into effect July 1, 1925, provide that all motion-picture films intended for public exhibition in Japan must be inspected by the Minister of Home Affairs. An application for inspection must be accompanied by two copies of an explanation of the film, a statement of the name of the applicant, the title of the film, the name of the producer, the number of reels, and the length in meters. The Government inspecting office, when deemed necessary, may order the presentation of documents proving the applicant's right of production in respect to the film concerned in the application. Therefore, if the legitimate distributor in Japan is in a position to comply promptly with this requirement in due time after the release of the film in the United States, there is little danger of that particular film being pirated.

In view of these circumstances, it is important that the American producer arrange for his protection and for the protection of his legitimate distributor in Japan by prompt action to enable the latter to register the film as soon as possible after its release in the United States. In addition to the film, a certificate of registration of the film and a power of attorney to the distributor, both duly authenticated by the Japanese consul general in New York (or other Japanese diplomatic or consular officials), should be promptly forwarded.

#### MOTION-PICTURE GUILDS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Numerous organizations have been established in Japan to promote practically every possible activity connected with motion pictures. Most powerful and prominent are the trade guilds, one of which, the Dai Eippon Katsudo Shashin Kyokai, acts as intermediary between the trade and officialdom. Its headquarters are located in the Tokyo metropolitan police building, and its membership is composed of the leading Japanese producing distributors and the American firm engaged in exhibition and distribution in Japan. Affiliated with this central body are two guilds embracing the trade at large, one guild for eastern Japan and the other for western Japan. Prominent distributors, exhibitors, and equipment manufacturers are members of these organizations. The six foremost Japanese producers also have an association of their own.

Exhibitors in Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and Kobe belong to guilds for united action in local affairs. The interpreters employed by them and those in other theaters are also members of interpreter guilds, one in eastern Japan and another in the south and the west. This division of interests is recognized in most Japanese affairs, the Kwanto or eastern district centering in Tokyo and the Kwansai or southwestern area centering in Osaka.

The employees of various large companies also have their associations; the salesmen of foreign distributors have a club, and the cameramen of the Shochiku Kinema Kabushiki Haisha are organized. Newspapers are sponsors of motion-picture research societies composed of their readers, and the editors of newspaper motion-picture sections have formed an association. A prominent motion-



picture actor is the center of a society composed of admirers who receive the privilege of attending advance private showings of films featuring their hero. The privilege of attending advance showings is also accorded to members of associations formed among enthusiasts by the large producing companies, and one Tokyo theater owner has promoted a similar organization among his patrons.

Another important organization is the Minatogawa Educational Motion-Picture Society, whose object is to encourage the exhibition of films of an elevating nature through the efforts of its members, who are police officials, theater owners, school-teachers, and a host of Kobe school children.

#### PUBLICATIONS

The leading Japanese newspapers include frequent motion-picture reviews in their columns and devote considerable space to motion-picture publicity in Sunday and holiday issues. Two of them, the Osaka Mainichi and the Osaka Asahi, publish monthly magazines devoted almost exclusively to motion pictures. These periodicals are reported to have a circulation of about 100,000 each and are leaders in the nontechnical field.

Trade journals and house papers issued by exhibitors and distributors in Japan are said to number more than 100. Four of these appear daily in Tokyo; the remainder are mostly monthly publications. The publishers range from serious groups of motion-picture students, whose journals are circulated privately, to purely technical trade papers issued on a commercial basis by publishing houses. Eleven of these periodicals are profusely illustrated. Many have a limited local circulation and lead a precarious existence upon the returns received from advertising.

#### SUMMARY

The Japanese motion-picture field presents four salient aspects. It offers the second best market in the Far East for American productions; the output of the domestic industry is probably the largest in the world in point of feature production; the field is dominated by the home industry; the utmost diversity is required in exhibition in order to meet variations in the knowledge and characteristics of Japanese patrons.

Of these features, the last is most interesting and important. Audiences of Japan differ widely according to locality as a result of the transition taking place at varying speed in different sections of the country. Residents in the large cities are subject to continuous direct foreign influence and have advanced to quasi-western standards; but in the provincial towns, old Japanese customs still retain a strong hold on the native mind, while the peasants of the interior conservatively retain many of their old distinctive customs and have little direct knowledge of things foreign. Modern western methods and ideals are penetrating through the empire at an increasing tempo, but at present the majority of Japanese have an outlook and knowledge tinged more by their own civilization than by occidental melioration.

The retention of Japanese standards has proved a great advantage to domestic producers, in that they have been able to cater to native



patrons with motion pictures based upon Japanese dramas which do not appeal to foreigners, and thus have not been produced abroad. Consequently, there has been no foreign competition in meeting the requirements of the largest percentage of Japanese audiences. Equally favorable to the home industry is the low average purchasing power of the Japanese people, which prevents frequent patronage of the comparatively expensive showings of foreign films. The nature and subjects of Japanese film dramas permit production at surprisingly low costs and allow exhibition at proportional admission charges.

Favored by these circumstances and protected by an import duty on motion pictures, Japanese producers have obtained control of their home market, but their concentration upon the domestic demands has incapacitated them for competition with foreign producers in other countries. The outstanding characteristic of the Japanese motion-picture industry and trade is, therefore, that they are essentially domestic. Foreign motion pictures are imported to meet the demand of a relatively small percentage of Japanese patrons and foreign residents who live in the large cities. Yet the total population of the empire (approximately 83,000,000) makes even this minority sufficiently large to create a considerable demand for modern screen dramas of quality, and the continued westernization of the Japanese will increase this demand.

### PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

While the Philippine Islands do not represent a large motion-picture market for American films, export statistics show that 2,210,413 linear feet of positive and negative film were sent to the islands in 1922, while a total of 3,117,229 linear feet were exported in 1928. A growing interest in motion pictures seems to indicate that 1929 footage will show an ample increase over last year's figure.

The reason for the comparatively slow growth in the consumption of motion pictures can be attributed to a considerable extent to the low per capita earning-power of the people. This statement applies especially to northern Luzon in contrast to the more prosperous Provinces of central and southern Luzon, and the comparatively wealthy sugar-producing Provinces on the islands of Panay and Negros where there are motion-picture theaters in practically every large town. However, established motion-picture houses are, in general, doing a satisfactory business, and it is thought that in the normal course of events there should be an excellent field for American films in the Philippine Islands within comparatively few years.

### DOMESTIC PRODUCTION

The domestic production of motion pictures is an unimportant factor in the Philippine Islands. There is only one producing company, located in Manila, which owns the only studio in the islands. This company produced its first picture in 1924 and has made a total of 11 pictures to date. Future plans call for the production of one picture every three months. These pictures are being shown in the Hawaiian Islands as well as in the Philippines. The company hopes later to enter other Oriental markets and certain sections in the



United States, especially those where there are large Filipino communities as there are in Hawaii.

No information is available relative to the cost of completed pictures, but production expenses are very low. The majority of the actors are amateurs who are paid little, if anything, for their services. The leads are taken by "stars" from local vaudeville stages, and they receive from \$150 to \$300 a picture. Most of the scenes are taken at night since many of the actors are otherwise employed during the day.

#### DISTRIBUTION

The time required for the distribution of films throughout the islands is a serious problem for the distributor. There are so many islands and remote towns, and the steamship service is in many cases so irregular that a film can not be given a general distribution in much less than two years. The reliability, or unreliability, of all exhibitors is fairly well established. Most of the distributors demand a cash deposit to cover all rentals, especially from unknown or unreliable exhibitors.

In theory, showings of films may be checked through the Bureau of Internal Revenue since all provincial treasurers are required to forward monthly reports concerning all films shown in their respective Provinces. Compliance with this law, however, is unusual.

#### "BICYCLING" AND PIRATING

"Bicycling" of films is almost as unknown as pirating. Bicycling is sometimes resorted to in Manila where one copy of the print is made to serve two exhibitors at the same time, but this practice is carried on by and with the consent of the distributor. Reports of illegal bicycling in the provincial towns are rare, but in the better-class Provinces where fair-sized towns are but an hour or two distant from one another along good automobile roads, bicycling is resorted to occasionally; films are retained for several days and exhibited at theaters in different towns before being returned.

#### RENTALS AND MUTILATION CHARGES

Charges made by distributors for films are more or less arbitrary and are based on the drawing power of the film as well as the size of the town and the capacity of the theater. Complete programs may be had from some distributors for as low as five pesos (\$2.50 in United States currency) although as a general rule the minimum is 20 pesos (\$10 in United States currency). If an episode or two of a serial is included, or if the film is a special production, the minimum price is higher, the distributor using the tactics of the producer and getting all that the traffic will bear.

The standard charge for mutilation is \$1 a foot, but distributors find that lengthy mutilations are rare. No attention is paid to mutilation of an occasional sprocket hole, except to inform the exhibitor of the condition of his projector and warn him to place it in proper repair. In cases of films destroyed by fire, the exhibitor must pay the entire laid-down cost of a new print plus a percentage for



loss in rentals owing to time required to obtain the new print. In practice this percentage may be minimized or increased according to the value of the exhibitor as a customer.

The average life of films is the same as elsewhere. Some of the distributors have their rooms fully equipped with modern cleaning machinery, and by carefully revising films after their return from each exhibition, they are able to get the maximum of service from each print.

#### IMPORTS AND FILM REGULATIONS

American motion-picture films are imported into the Philippine Islands free of duty; films from other countries pay 35 per cent ad valorem. If cost of royalty is included on the invoice, duty is assessed both on the film cost and on the amount of the royalty.

The Philippine tariff law provides that "theatrical equipment, \* \* \* devices for projecting pictures and parts and appurtenances therefor" may be brought into the country under bond for exportation within four months, and also provides for an extension of time not to exceed three months. Under these sections, motion-picture film may be brought into the Philippine Islands from any country, exhibited for seven months, and then exported, without payment of duty.

The following table shows the imports of film, in meters, into the Philippine Island during 1928, and the extent to which advantage is taken over the local tariff provisions:

| Origin <sup>1</sup>         | Imports, in meters |                    |           |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|
|                             | Duty free          | Taxed              | Total     |
| United States.....          | 1,794,044          | <sup>2</sup> 3,437 | 1,797,481 |
| China.....                  | 244,998            | 5,057              | 250,055   |
| France.....                 | 27,415             | 9,131              | 36,546    |
| Italy.....                  | 8,416              | 7,522              | 15,938    |
| Great Britain.....          | 10,981             | 2,353              | 13,334    |
| British East Indies.....    | 12,261             | 120                | 12,381    |
| Singapore.....              | 10,726             | 600                | 11,326    |
| Japan.....                  | 6,239              | 3,498              | 9,737     |
| Hawaii.....                 | 8,111              | -----              | 8,111     |
| Germany.....                | 2,046              | 750                | 2,796     |
| Spain.....                  | 2,455              | -----              | 2,455     |
| Austria.....                | -----              | 80                 | 80        |
| Netherland East Indies..... | -----              | 30                 | 30        |

<sup>1</sup> Does not necessarily infer that films were produced in these countries but rather were received in the Philippines from these localities.

<sup>2</sup> Represents duty paid either on films of non-American manufacture shipped from the United States or films manufactured in the United States but shipped to the islands from non-American countries.

There are no ticket taxes assessed, but in lieu of them the Government requires a payment of 3 centavos (1½ cents in United States currency) per meter of film, which is collected at the customhouse upon entry. American exporters should know that if the invoice calls for 7,000 feet and the film actually measures 6,000 feet, collection of 1½ cents per meter is made on the basis of 7,000 feet shown by the invoices. Care should be exercised in billing the exact number of feet included in each shipment.

There is a minimum tax imposed by the insular government of 200 pesos a year on all motion-picture theaters in the Philippine Islands.



The city of Manila assesses a minimum tax of 1,800 pesos on all "first-run" houses, and all "second-run" houses in Manila are taxed 90 pesos a year. Taxes assessed by municipalities other than Manila vary. A fairly general tax is 100 pesos a year, although in some municipalities the tax is as high as 3 pesos for each performance. One of the Bureau of Internal Revenue regulations is that all theaters must print on their programs a plan of the house, although they are not required to issue programs.

### EXHIBITION

The popularity of motion pictures as entertainment is growing more rapidly than import figures would indicate. More theaters are in existence to-day than existed in 1921, and many of them are giving more shows a day, charging higher rates of admission, and using a greater number of reels for each performance than in the earlier years. There is now a total of 275 motion-picture theaters, located on the various islands, as follows: Luzon, 191; Negros, 25; Mindanao, 18; Panay, 17; Leyte, 6; Cebu, 6; Basilan, 2; Masbate, 2; Marinduque, 2; Mindoro, 2; Samar, 2; Bohol, 1; and Sulu, 1. Several of these houses are open only part of the year.

In the five "first-run" houses in Manila admission prices are 1 peso for the balcony seats and 50 centavos for the lower floor. The remaining theaters charge approximately the following prices: First class, 40 to 50 centavos; second class, 30 centavos; and third class, 10 centavos.

### FILM PREFERENCES

The types of pictures in general demand have changed but little in the last 10 years, although there is a slowly growing tendency to get away from the serial type and "westerns." Practically all pictures made by the larger producing companies in the United States have been exhibited in the Philippine Islands. Costume or "period" pictures come in for their share of popularity, and "society" dramas with the triangle complex still have their following, although pictures of this type must have some unusual appeal to claim a large attendance. Historical films go well at times and films containing genuine "heart appeal" are generally successful. Religious pictures are usually well received, provided they contain something other than purely religious appeal.

American-made pictures are by far the most popular and most successful in the islands.

The average motion-picture program in the "first-run" houses consists of a feature, and one, two, or three shorts (comedy, news reel, or serial) to bring the program up to a total length of 9,000 or 10,000 feet. In many neighborhood theaters, however, double programs are shown. Most theaters change programs twice a week. Some of the small theaters change programs every night, but since many are open only on week-ends, the average for all such theaters is three programs a week. With the exception of the "first-run" houses in Manila, which cater to the foreign and better-class native communities, "action" pictures are most in demand. This fact is particularly true in the smaller provincial theaters catering to the laboring class. A practice followed in some of the provincial towns



is to change the program every other day for six days of the week and then on the seventh day reshow the entire week's program.

#### ADVERTISING

Advertising in Manila is generally considered of importance in the following order: Daily newspapers; poster displays; and private mailing lists (for programs). Handbills and bands are seldom used. In the smaller provincial towns, the principal advertising is done with printed programs in the form of handbills, and with the exhibition of posters attached to a "carretela" (a 2-wheeled 1-horse cart) with a man or boy inside beating a drum. In the larger towns, an automobile truck is sometimes plastered with posters, loaded with a band, and driven throughout the streets. Hand-lettered posters are sometimes pasted in conspicuous places of the town, and display posters used outside the theaters are frequently arranged on frames so that they may be carried about. Motion-picture magazines, all published in the United States, play their part in the general scheme of advertising, several thousand copies being sent to the Philippines each month.

#### EQUIPMENT AND THEATER CONSTRUCTION

Aside from the cities of Manila, Cebu, and Iloilo, the motion-picture theaters of the islands are, in general, poorly equipped and are not considered up-to-date in arrangement or operation. About 75 per cent of the projectors in use are made in France. Owing to the construction of these projectors, which leave the film exposed between the upper and lower magazines, their use in the City of Manila is prohibited. Yet they are being used elsewhere under temporary permits. All Manila houses are equipped with American projectors, but there are only seven theaters in the islands using motor-driven projectors. Of the 101 electric-light plants in the islands only 7 give 24-hour service, which in most places precludes the present possibility of daytime screenings.

The past year has seen in Manila a decided improvement in the leading "first-run" motion-picture houses. Two have been remodeled and redecorated, and one has been constructed with a total seating capacity of 1,200. Another theater in the islands is now under construction on the Escolta. When completed, this theater will have a seating capacity of 1,750 and is expected to be the largest and finest in the islands.

#### CENSORSHIP

Films imported from the United States are not required to be censored, since they have previously been passed by the national board of review in the United States. Foreign films must be censored at a private showing by a board appointed by the Governor General. In Manila the board consists of 11 members; at the various subports of entry the collector of customs is a member of the board and acts as censor for all films imported through his respective port. In a general way the board is vested with authority to reject as a whole or in part any film found to be "by reason of its obscene or indecent character or by its being subversive of public



order" improper or objectionable for public showing. The board interprets the following as grounds for exclusion or cutting: Madness, lewdness, criminal scenes, especially those having a tendency to teach methods of crime, race prejudice, etc.

## NETHERLAND EAST INDIES

### DOMESTIC PRODUCTION

So far as is known, only four motion-picture films have been produced in the Netherland East Indies, three of which were native folk-lore pictures and one an action picture with scenes laid in and around Batavia. "Haksen Wraak" and "Lily of Java," the latter produced by a Chinese company organized for the purpose, are the most ambitious of these productions, but they have afforded little competition to American films.

The capital invested in these productions is unknown, but it is estimated that not more than \$20,000 was spent on all four of them. All were produced in the open air, with the exception of one which was filmed partially in a rented warehouse, temporarily converted into a studio. Native actors were used in all of these pictures. It is reported that two Chinese girls taking part were paid at the rate of \$200 each for their services in one picture. In view of the purely local character of these pictures, the lack of technical ability available and the slight degree of success so far attained, it is expected that there will be little, if any, further activity in domestic production of motion pictures for some time to come.

### DISTRIBUTION

There is a total of 22 distributors covering the Netherland East Indies, divided according to nationality as follows: American companies, 7; Dutch individuals, 2; German individuals, 1; Austrian individuals, 1; Australian companies, 1; Chinese, 10.

Rentals of motion-picture films range from 300 florins (\$120) for a feature shown in a large town to 25 florins (\$10) for a film shown in a small theater. On big productions released on a percentage basis, a return as high as 4,000 florins (\$1,600) has been obtained by the distributors from exhibitions in the larger towns. This is a high mark, however, and can be attained only by an exceptionally profitable production.

### EXHIBITION

The total number of theaters in the Netherland East Indies is 214, of which 144 are in Java, 47 in Sumatra, 10 in Borneo, 6 in the Celebes, 2 in the Moluccas, and 7 on various other islands. In Batavia, the principal city, there are five theaters catering to Europeans and located in the residential section of the city, and six theaters catering to native trade and located in the downtown and native sections.

Each year during the monsoon (rainy season) a number of theaters are temporarily closed. No theaters have been permanently discon-



tinued during the last year, the tendency being to expand rather than contract the exhibition capacity of the territory.

Most of the native theaters are provided with wooden benches only, and a great number of natives can crowd into them. About the nearest estimate which can be made of the seating capacity of all the theaters in the Netherland East Indies is 110,000. The larger theaters in the centers of population seat, as a rule, not more than 1,000.

Admission prices to theaters throughout the territory range from 0.25 florin (10 cents in United States currency) to 2.4 florins (96 cents). The average rate of admission is about 0.75 florin (30 cents). The average motion-picture program consists of a feature, a comedy, and a news reel, or some other one-reel subject. Two daily performances are usually given, commencing at 7 and 9.45 p. m. Programs are usually changed twice weekly in the larger towns, and three times weekly in the smaller centers. However, a big production will run from 7 to 10 days in the larger cities.

#### FILM PREFERENCES

The native public, which constitutes the big market for motion pictures in the Netherland East Indies, prefers action pictures and comedies of the obvious kind. A gradual change is taking place in which the serial is losing its favor, and the natives are now also attending theaters which show the better type of films. Society dramas and problem plays possess no appeal for the natives, however, and it is doubtful if they will ever patronize films of this type, in view of the fact that their religion (Mohammedan) and their type of family life give them no background for a sympathetic comprehension of such subjects. The European audiences, on the other hand, are Continental in their tastes and prefer dramatic themes, films based on opera, and to a certain extent, costume plays.

#### THEATER CONSTRUCTION

Plans for a new modern theater in Batavia, Java, are reported to be under way, and present plans call for a large organ, up-to-date ventilating equipment and other such improvements. A new theater seating about 900 was completed in April in Soerabaya. This theater, constructed of brick and plaster, caters to the European and higher-class Chinese patrons. In general, the cost of building motion-picture theaters in the Netherland East Indies is low, compared with other territories, yet there is little tendency to invest heavily. The business of exhibiting motion pictures has not yet achieved recognition as an industry in the Netherland East Indies, and most of the investment so far has been on the part of Chinese and Arabs who are thought to be unsuited to develop the real potentialities of this industry.

#### CENSORSHIP

No statistics are available as to the number of pictures imported, as this data is in the possession of the censor, and he has hitherto refused to give details in this respect. It is known, however, that a number of films have been refused by the censors, the subjects includ-



ing: Films dealing with revolution or war between European and colored races, or with the situation in China; films showing the overthrow of royalty; films in which scanty clothing is worn or in which scenes are shown which would lower the prestige of the whites in the eyes of Chinese or natives. Scenes of the Russian revolution are invariably cut by the censor.

The principal development in the film situation during the year 1928 was the alteration of censorship fees from 7.5 florins (\$3 in United States currency) per reel to 1.5 florins (60 cents) per meter or part thereof. This cut in fees has, of course, resulted in a considerable decrease in the costs to distributors.

## SIAM

### DOMESTIC PRODUCTION

Production of motion pictures in Siam has not been conducted on an organized basis prior to 1928. A few Siamese pictures have been made by different individuals, who have engaged in this work partly for their own amusement and partly as an experiment. One such picture was made in 1924, two in 1925, and three in 1926, but the total capital invested probably did not exceed \$1,000 or \$2,000. Three pictures were produced in 1927 and eight in 1928.

The stimulation of 1928 production is attributed to the activities of an American corporation which commenced operations in Bangkok early in that year. This company, capitalized at \$250,000, was organized for the purpose of making Chinese motion pictures. The company commenced operations under great difficulties, the principal one being the lack of good Chinese actors, but the initial obstacles are gradually being overcome, and the company is now actually producing. A suitable building was taken over in Bangkok, where a laboratory was constructed with modern equipment. This is the only studio in Siam.

### DISTRIBUTION

Distribution in Siam is handled through the Phathanakorn Cinema Co., whose connections in Singapore and Java will also take pictures for exhibition in those territories. This organization controls 37 of the 42 theaters in the country, the remaining being operated by three Chinese. There is no American distributor in this field at the present time, but the American production unit previously mentioned reports that it intends to distribute its own films at a later date.

The average rental is 43 bahts<sup>1</sup> (\$19.35 in United States currency) per reel. There are no exclusive rentals. About 95 per cent of the pictures now imported come from Singapore, where the American companies have their offices. The remainder are imported from Shanghai. These consist of Chinese pictures, the proportion of which tends to increase.

The motion-picture situation in Siam has been stable, with a slow growth in demand for films. It is estimated, for example, that the

---

<sup>1</sup> The Siamese baht, valued at about 45 cents in United States currency, was formerly known as the tical.



receipts from exhibition of motion pictures in 1927 amounted to about 650,000 bahts (\$292,500 in United States currency). In 1928 this figure probably did not increase by more than 10,000 bahts. The market for films in Siam will increase slowly, and only as the people develop a capacity to appreciate motion pictures as a result of a gradual improvement in the buying power of the lower classes.

### EXHIBITION

The total seating capacity of the 42 theaters in Siam is estimated to be 36,800. Four are traveling motion-picture houses, 6 exhibit once a week, 12 give performances every other night, and 20 offer daily exhibitions, except those theaters outside Bangkok which discontinue their shows during the rainy seasons owing to poor roads and subsequent lack of attendance. The frequent changes in programs are necessary in view of the small number of habitual attendants; even the most popular releases can not run more than one week in Bangkok. In the larger theaters in Bangkok the usual program consists of a news reel, a comedy and a feature picture, or a total of about 14 reels. In the smaller theaters and in the interior of the country the news reel is not appreciated, and comedies and features make up the programs. The range of admission prices for natives, who supply most of the trade, is from 10 to 50 satangs ( $4\frac{1}{2}$  to  $22\frac{1}{2}$  cents in United States currency); the bulk of the admissions paid do not exceed 25 satangs. Europeans in Bangkok pay 1 baht or 2 bahts for good seats. One theater charges 3 bahts for choice balcony seats.

The public theater law of 1927 requires motion-picture theaters to follow specific details for theater construction and provides that all theater plans be submitted to the Government engineers for approval.

### BRITISH MALAYA

British Malaya comprises the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States, and the Non-Federated Malay States. The Straits Settlements colony consists of the island of Singapore, the town and Province of Malacca, the island of Penang, Province Wellesley, the territory and island of the Dindings, the Cocos (or Keeling) Islands, Christmas Island, and the island of Labuan, having a total area of approximately 1,600 square miles and an estimated population in 1927 of about 1,060,000. The Federated Malay States consist of the following: Perak, Selangor, Pahang, and Negri Sembilan. The Non-Federated Malay States are Johore, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Trengganu. All the Malay States are within the Malay Peninsula and have a total area of 55,000 square miles and a population of approximately 2,650,000. The principal cities in which motion pictures are now being shown with success are (in order of their size and importance) Singapore, Penang, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Klang, Seremban, Taiping, and Sungei Patani.

### DOMESTIC PRODUCTION

With the exception of one unsuccessful attempt on the part of a Chinese company, there has never been any effort made to produce



motion pictures in British Malaya. The failure of this venture does not necessarily mean that pictures can not be produced in Malaya, since this company was handicapped by incompetent directors, inexperienced players, and unskilled cameramen and technicians. Approximately \$5,000 was spent on the one film produced.

### DISTRIBUTION

There are 10 legitimate companies distributing European and American films in British Malaya. In addition, there are four Chinese companies dealing exclusively in Chinese films and several independent buyers who obtain their pictures on the open market.

In Singapore the average rental rates are \$40 to \$50 (Straits)<sup>2</sup> per reel for features and news reels, and \$20 (Straits) per reel for comedies. "Superproductions" are usually rented for 40 to 50 per cent of the total box-office receipts; rates to theaters outside Singapore are lower. All of the distributors have exclusive rights for British Malaya. Official import figures do not give a clear picture of the origin of films brought into British Malaya. Many of the pictures shown as imports from India, Hong Kong, China, and Australia are really of American origin.

The following table shows the imports and exports of films passing through Singapore in 1927 and demonstrates the strategical position of that city as a distributing point for films in Middle Asia:

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS OF MOTION-PICTURE FILMS AT SINGAPORE IN 1927

| Country                                 | Imports         |            |                           | Exports         |            |                           |
|---|-----------------|------------|---------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------------|
|   | Number of films | Total feet | Value, in Straits dollars | Number of films | Total feet | Value, in Straits dollars |
| United Kingdom.....                     | 476             | 452,555    | 13,819                    | 8               | 1,760      | 796                       |
| British possessions and protectorates.. | 5,036           | 6,954,395  | 187,073                   | 5,490           | 5,293,453  | 168,830                   |
| Continent of Europe.....                | 408             | 336,996    | 54,300                    | 21              | 20,500     | 1,165                     |
| United States.....                      | 4,006           | 3,761,260  | 128,069                   | 662             | 559,108    | 3,425                     |
| Japan.....                              | 37              | 35,202     | 1,040                     | 48              | 48,000     | 288                       |
| Other countries.....                    | 5,688           | 5,306,762  | 178,397                   | 7,694           | 7,169,708  | 239,499                   |
| Total.....                              | 15,651          | 16,847,170 | 562,698                   | 13,923          | 13,092,529 | 414,003                   |

### EXHIBITION

There are about 35 permanent motion-picture theaters scattered throughout 16 different towns in British Malaya with a total seating capacity of approximately 21,000. In addition, there are probably between 10 and 20 small houses that are continually opening or closing, depending upon the prosperity of the natives within the immediate locality. The total seating capacity of these irregular theaters probably does not exceed 4,000, which places the total seating capacity of the motion-picture houses in the territory at about 25,000. At present there is only one theater capable of seating over 1,000 people, 4 with a seating capacity of between 800 and 1,000, 16

<sup>2</sup> Straits dollar now valued at about 56 cents in United States currency.



between 600 and 800, 11 between 400 and 600, and the remainder with less than 400.

Singapore, the seat of government of all British Malaya, is the largest and most important city and has 14 motion-picture theaters with a total seating capacity of almost 6,000. This figure includes 400 seats in two hotels where performances are given twice a week, 200 seats in the Y. M. C. A. where there is one performance weekly, and 200 seats in the Tanglin barracks theater which is usually reserved for the soldiers stationed at the barracks. Penang and Kuala Lumpur, the next most important towns, have four theaters each, with a total seating capacity of 2,840 in Penang and 2,600 in Kuala Lumpur. The remaining houses are scattered throughout the territory, Ipoh and Taiping being the only other towns having as many as two houses each.

#### ADMISSION PRICES AND PROGRAMS OFFERED

Admission prices range from about 8 cents to \$1.12 (United States currency), the former being the price for the cheapest seats in the small native theaters and the latter being the price of admission to the best seats in the larger houses. Europeans always sit in the best seats, but the natives make up about 85 per cent of the patronage of the theaters.

The average program in the motion-picture houses in British Malaya usually consists of one comedy and one feature; about 10 houses which cater to the European trade show news reels. The usual program in the large houses starts off with a comedy, following by a "western thriller," an interval of 15 minutes, a news reel, another comedy, and finally the feature. Owners will frequently show from 20 to 30 reels in one evening. With the exception of a few theaters, all of the houses exhibit seven days a week. Only 13 houses have matinees and these are only on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. Programs are usually changed twice a week except in the large houses in Singapore, where they are allowed to run a week. In unusual cases when a "super" is being shown, the run sometimes lasts 10 days or two weeks.

#### FILM PREFERENCES

American pictures, especially those of the "slap-stick" comedy type and the "western thriller," are by far the most popular ones shown in this territory. It must be remembered that pictures sent to British Malaya for exhibition must appeal to the native and not necessarily to the European. Sentimental pictures, pictures depending on subtle titles to put them over, and pictures eulogizing American sports do not find favor in Malaya, because they are not understood. Neither do they like excessive display of the American flag. American "super" comedy productions usually play to a packed house. Because of the difficulty of getting pictures passed by the censor, American exporters should note with care the different grounds on which films can be banned in Malaya; these are enumerated in a following paragraph.

A recent development seems to indicate a growing competition in Chinese films which are reported to amount to between 20 and 30 per



cent of the total number of films shown. Of the 35 motion-picture theaters in this territory, 13 are said to be exhibiting Chinese pictures exclusively, with the others showing 20 to 50 per cent of these films on their programs. Every town of any size now has at least one theater exhibiting Chinese films.

#### THEATER CONSTRUCTION

Of importance to those interested in the motion-picture industry in Malaya is the proposed plan for the erection of a new and modern theater in Singapore. The building is to be constructed of steel and concrete, and when completed will have a seating capacity of 1,600, and will be equipped with elevators for conveying patrons to the balcony, a sliding roof in order that patrons may have the benefit of fresh air, and a complete cooling system to provide air 20° cooler than the street temperature. In addition, there are three other proposed theaters for Singapore, one, which will seat over 1,000 persons, is almost completed; another having a seating capacity of about 800 is expected to open shortly. So far as is known, no important theaters have closed down during the last year and no other places of amusement were converted into motion-picture houses.

#### BRITISH LEGISLATION

As a result of a recent British Imperial Conference, attention was called to the fact that an overwhelming predominance of American film productions were being shown in British colonies. A campaign was then initiated to introduce a larger proportion of British pictures into British theaters. In the spring of 1927 a bill was framed in the Straits Settlements to amend the existing theater ordinances to include a provision that 7½ per cent of the total annual footage shown in theaters in the Straits Settlements be of British origin. Under the provisions of the proposed bill the proportion of British films was to be increased to 10 per cent in 1929 and thereafter to rise by 5 per cent annually until the maximum of 30 per cent was reached.

Actually the provisions of 7½ per cent in 1928 and 10 per cent in 1929 were liberal, since British films are actually being shown in excess of this proportion. Despite the efforts of distributors representing American companies, it appeared that nothing could stop the passage of the film quota bill. However, it was announced by the attorney general on July 2, 1928, that the Government had decided "that it would be premature to undertake legislation designed to compel exhibitors to exhibit a fixed proportion of British films."

#### CENSORSHIP

During the year 1927, 112 pictures were banned by the official censor in Singapore for 22 various reasons. "Gun play" seems to be the most objectionable grounds, almost 40 pictures being barred on this account. Among the scenes prohibited in this territory are those showing burglary, gun play, criminal underworld, violent assaults on police, intermingling of races, immorality, "eternal triangle," seduction, western bar rooms, ill treatment of women, communism, gambling, and cruelty to animals.



Censorship fees are \$6 (Straits) per thousand feet; if the picture is disapproved the distributor has the right to apply to the appeal board for a reconsideration. If the appeal is granted there is an additional charge of \$11 (Straits) for the board fees. When the appeal is not approved a penalty is imposed in the way of a fine of \$50 (Straits) plus the board fee of \$11 (Straits). The ordinance to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the exhibition of motion pictures is now being considered.

## FRENCH INDO-CHINA <sup>3</sup>

### CONDITIONS AFFECTING THE INDUSTRY

Indo-China is a French colony with an area of about 270,000 square miles and a population estimated at about 25,000,000; it has several densely populated districts (centering at Saigon, the capital, Hanoi, Haiphong, and Pnompenh), but much of the other territory is poorly settled or is occupied by more or less wild tribes. The peoples of the country differ widely in race, language, and religion, the predominating classes being made up of Annamites, Cambodians, and Laotians, all somewhat influenced by the French and the Chinese. The total foreign population is estimated at about 17,000.

The development of the motion-picture industry in this territory has been very slow, compared to the progress being made in other parts of the Far East, chiefly because of the mixed character of all the peoples, the lack of educational facilities, and the fact that French film companies hold an almost complete monopoly of the domestic market. A very small portion of the native population understands French. The Annamite language has been understood by some, but during the last years since the language has been romanized by the French, the younger generation can not read the old Annamite while the older generation can not read the new. Film titles that have been translated into the Annamite language have proved to be as unsatisfactory, from the native standpoint, as French titles. Heretofore the same French or foreign films have been given to the natives as to the European population, and the majority of these are slow in movement and are not understood by the natives.

### EXHIBITION OF FILMS

The total number of motion-picture houses in Indo-China is reported to be 34, the largest part of which are either owned or controlled by a company in Saigon, which is also the exclusive agent for certain French films in this territory. Since this firm holds an almost complete monopoly, competition seems almost impossible unless by a company with a capital large enough to construct its own theaters and import its own films. Most of the theaters are located in the four large cities of Saigon, Hanoi, Haiphong, and Pnompenh.

With one or two exceptions, the motion-picture houses are old theaters, Chinese show houses, or old café concert halls. Loges usually extend around the hall and comprise the entire balconies,

---

<sup>3</sup> Based on a report of Leland L. Smith, consul at Saigon, in 1924. No later information is yet available.



leaving the lower floor only for the bulk of the audience. This arrangement precludes the possibility of having many cheap seats or of separating the natives from the Europeans, which is thought to be desired by both. The theater equipment is most rudimentary; the seats are unpainted rattan, which, however, in a tropical climate, are better than seats of solid wood. The floors are tiled and decorations are confined to paintings on whitewashed walls. The projecting machines in use are old and of a cheap make; they are practically all of French manufacture. There are few electric plants, and these have machinery so antiquated as to cause unsteady and unsatisfactory lighting.

The theaters in the larger cities are open every night, and matinees are usually held on Sundays and Thursdays. In the smaller communities weekly or semiweekly performances are the rule. Films are usually shown but once at each performance. Admission prices range from 15 to 75 cents (in United States currency), yet there are very few cheap seats. The educated or working natives of Indo-China are poorly paid, and the above-mentioned prices are more than many of them can afford.

#### POSSIBILITIES OF THE MARKET

About 40 per cent of the films exhibited in Indo-China are American, yet they are often old and badly used, having come by way of France. This fact has mitigated against American films in Indo-China and has often been the cause of their being supplanted by films of French manufacture. The local directors of the company which controls most of the theaters complain that the expensiveness of American films makes it impossible to procure them from France for this limited market until they are old and almost worn out.

Representatives of American producers having branches in Manila, Singapore, and Hong Kong have been unable to interest the Saigon company to any extent, either on account of high prices or on account of the various contracts held by the local company, by which it receives the old films of the principal American producers from their branches in France. It is usually impossible to obtain the films of the important American producers other than through France, since the rights to produce in French colonies usually are given with the French rights.

Should American exporters of motion pictures find a way to properly introduce their films into this market, they must face other considerations in developing a good demand for their films. Admission prices must be reduced before any great portion of the native population will be able to attend motion-picture theaters, and a study of the likes and dislikes of the people should be made. Films of intricate plots or of scientific subjects should be avoided, but comedies or pictures of the simple adventurous type should find an immediate reception from the majority.











